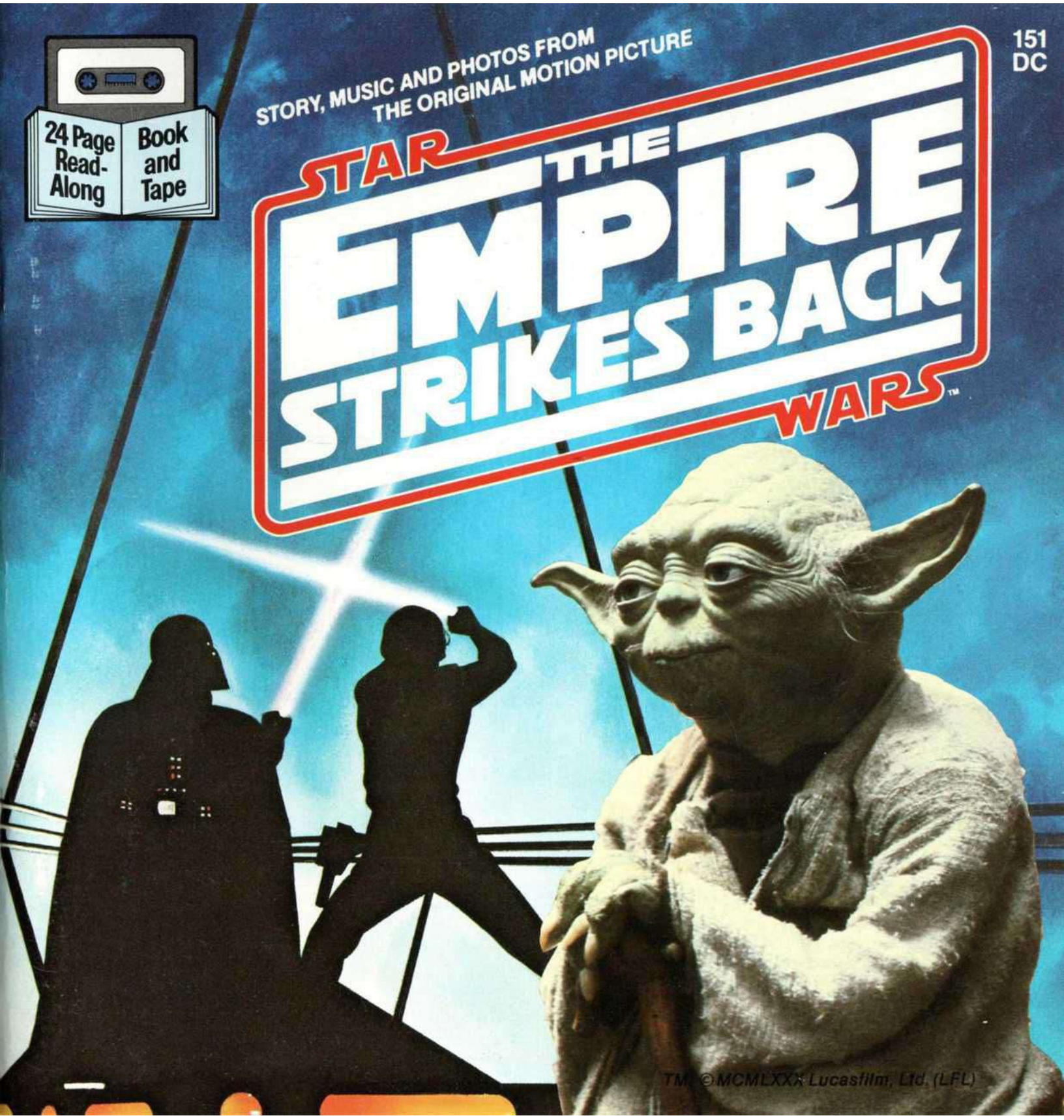
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STAR WARS™
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
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STAR WARS™ THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

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This is the story of **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.** You can read along with me in your book. You will know it is time to turn the page when you hear Artoo-Detoo beep like this...

LET'S BEGIN NOW:

IT WAS A DARK TIME FOR THE REBELLION

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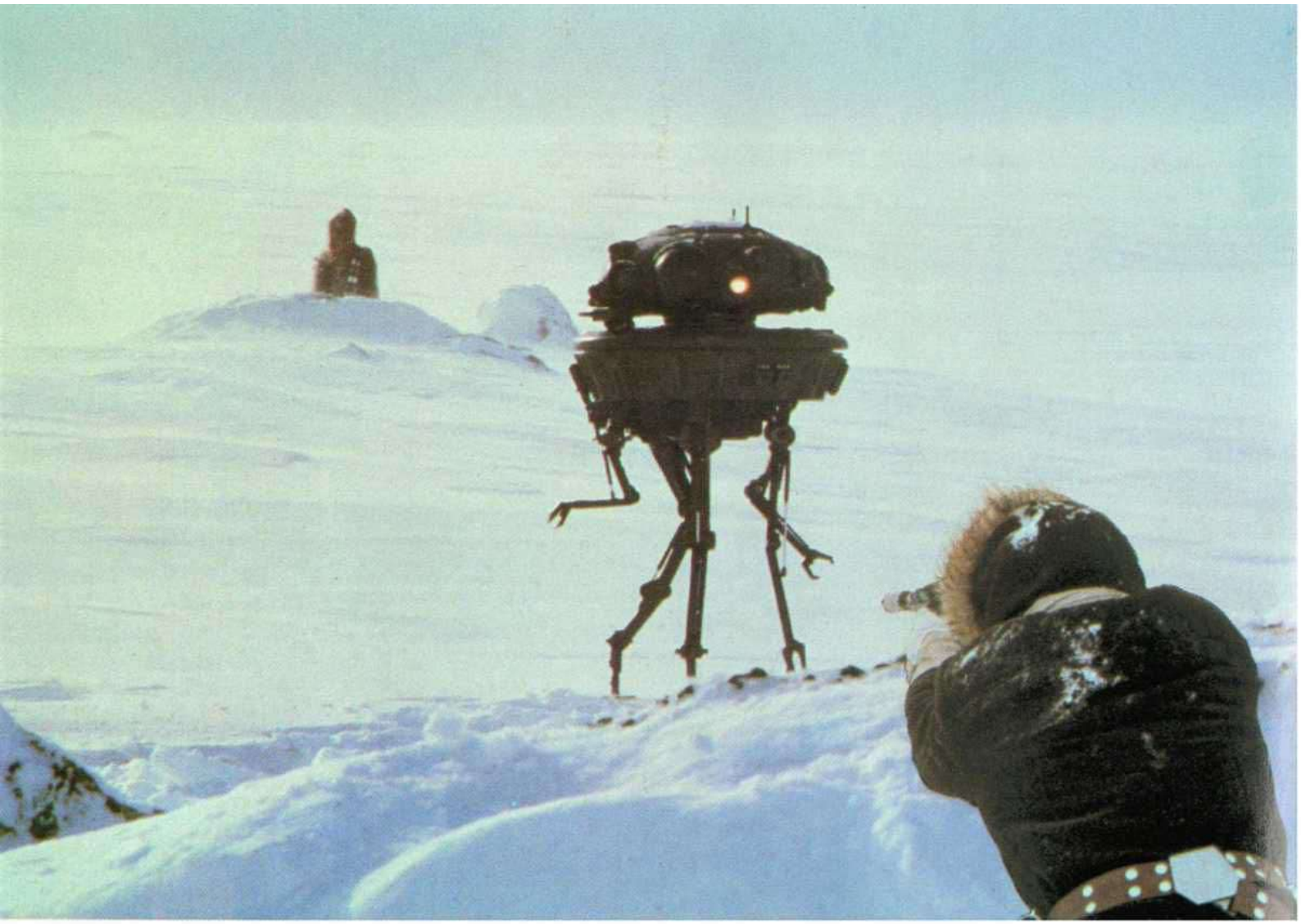
After the loss of the Death Star, the evil Galactic Empire intensified its efforts to crush the Rebel Alliance. Princess Leia and her small band of freedom fighters sought out the remote ice planet of Hoth for their new secret base.

From atop a shaggy Tauntaun, Commander Luke Skywalker surveyed the snowy landscape. "Well, girl, no sign of Imperial troops. It looks like we're safe for now!"



Deep in the frozen caverns of the Rebel base, the famous star pilot, Han Solo watched a blip on the radar screen. "Looks like trouble. An Imperial probe droid. Come on, Chewie. Let's take care of that thing!"

Outside, Han and his Wookiee co-pilot tracked down the intruder. As Chewbacca distracted the droid, Han blasted it into a thousand fiery pieces.

But before being destroyed, the probe had transmitted a final message to the evil commander of the Imperial fleet, Darth Vader. "Set a course for Hoth. The Rebels are there and Skywalker is with them."

Suspecting danger, the Rebels began evacuating their base. Princess Leia's voice rang through the ice halls. "Air and ground troops to your battle stations!"

As the Rebels waited nervously for an enemy attack, the ground began to tremble violently. Inside the base, ice walls shattered and heavy machinery toppled to the ground. Han raced to Leia's side. "I don't know what's heading this way, Princess, but it's shaking the place apart."

Walkers, huge dinosaur-like war machines, stomped their way across the snowy ground. Deadly cannons roared as they marched toward the base, crushing everything in their path.

Luke led a squadron of snow speeders against the machines. "It's no use! Their armor's too strong for our blasters. But we've got to hold them off long enough to get everyone out of the base!"

As the last wave of Rebels left Hoth, Princess Leia turned quickly to Han. "Well, I guess this is goodbye. I've got to get to my craft now." Suddenly a wall of ice crashed down, blocking her escape route.

Han tugged Leia toward the *Millennium Falcon.* "It looks like you're stuck with me, Your Highness!"

The golden droid, C-3PO, shuffled hurriedly after them. "Surely you wouldn't think of leaving me behind!"

Darth Vader led his Imperial troops into the hangar as Han tried desperately to start the *Falcon's* engines. "Would it help if I got out and pushed?" snapped Leia.

"This baby's still got a few surprises. OK, Chewie, punch it!"

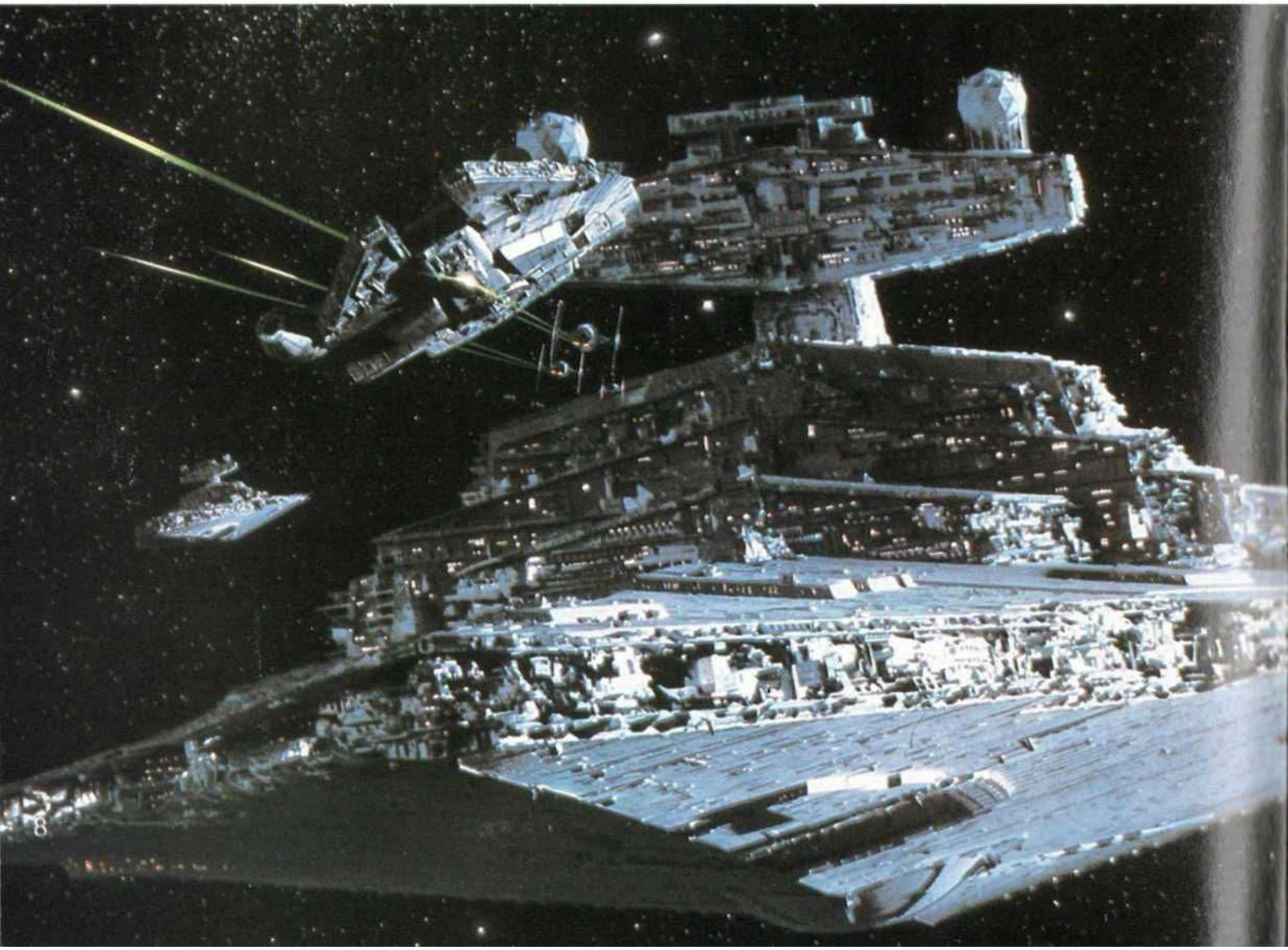
The Falcon roared out of the hangar, leaving Vader empty-handed. "I want that ship!"

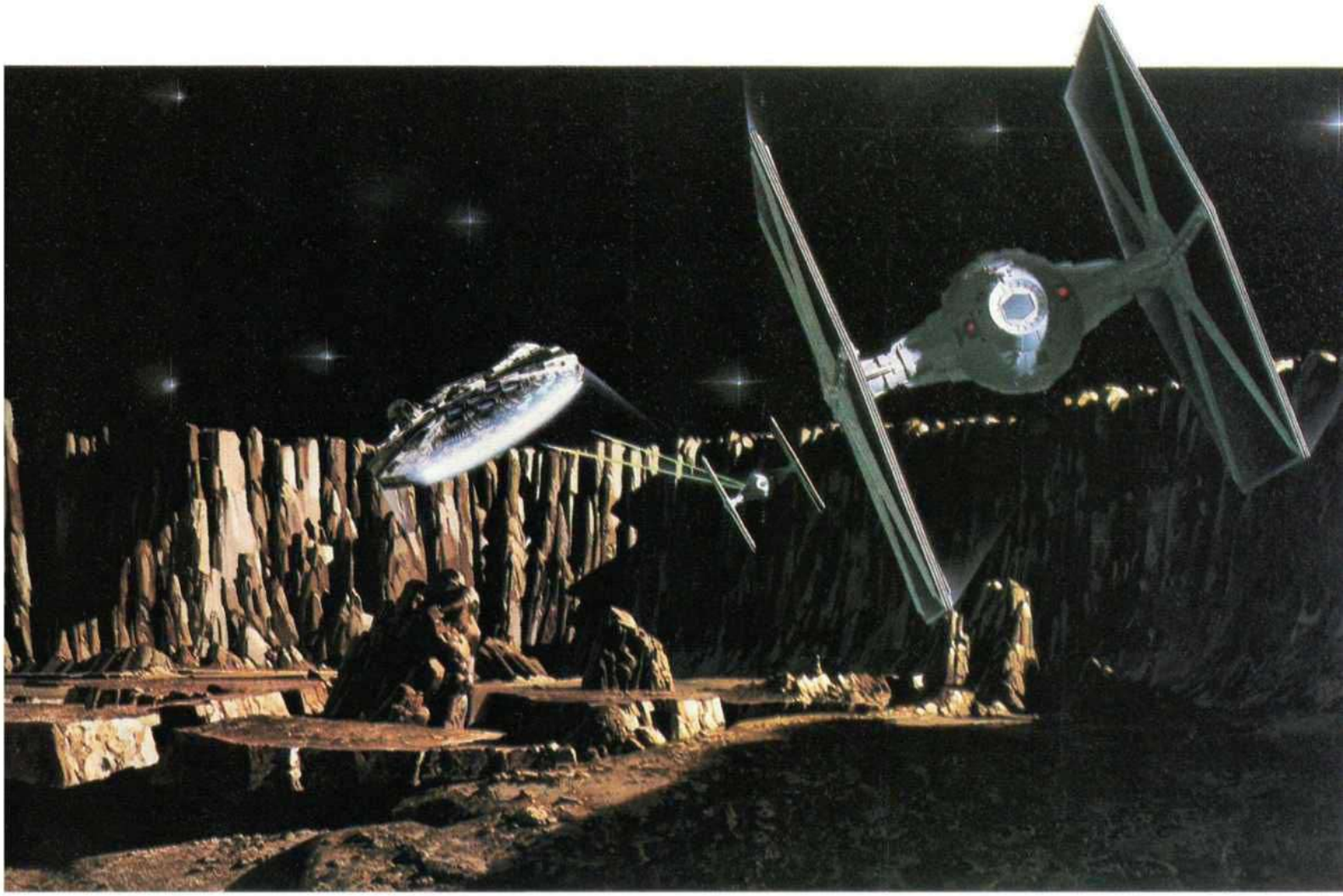
C-3PO sighed happily, "Thank goodness we're finally safe!"

"Don't get too comfortable," warned Han. We've got some TIE fighters right on our tail!"

"And they're gaining, hot shot," added Leia.

"Well, if I can't outrace them, Your Highness, I'll just have to outfly them. Hold on!"





Han steered straight into a dangerous asteroid field. Under his skillful control, the *Falcon* dodged left and right, just scraping past the speeding rocks. Unable to follow Han's wild course, the pursuers smashed into the asteroids!

"Now let's find a safe port," smiled Han. His terrified passengers agreed wholeheartedly!

Back on Hoth, Luke boarded his X-wing fighter and greeted his droid co-pilot, R2-D2. "OK, Artoo, all ships are away. Now let's get out of here!" As Luke punched a new course into the computer, he heard a questioning chirp. "That's right, we're not joining the others, we're going to Dagobah. I'm going to train to be a Jedi, like my father."

Darth Vader sat alone in his meditation chamber aboard the Imperial destroyer *Avenger,* when an urgent message from the Emperor arrived. "There is a grave disturbance in the Force. Should Young Skywalker become a Jedi, he will be a terrible threat to us!"

An evil plan began to form in Vader's mind: "He will join us or die, my master!"

Darth Vader knew he could catch Luke in a deadly trap if he used the right bait—Han and Leia! From all over the galaxy, Vader summoned bounty hunters. "I'm offering a generous reward for finding Solo and the princess. After I have Skywalker, you may have Solo. I'm told he has a handsome price on his head. This could be a very profitable undertaking for you...gentlemen!"

Luke's fighter landed on the murky swamp planet of Dagobah. "Ben Kenobi said I'd find Yoda, the Jedi Master, here. But this place gives me the creeps. I feel like..."

"You feel like what?"

Luke drew his blaster and whirled around to see an ancient little creature emerging from the fog.

The odd creature pointed to Luke's blaster. "Away put your weapon. You'll not learn the ways of the Force with that. So, you wish to become Jedi, like your father!"

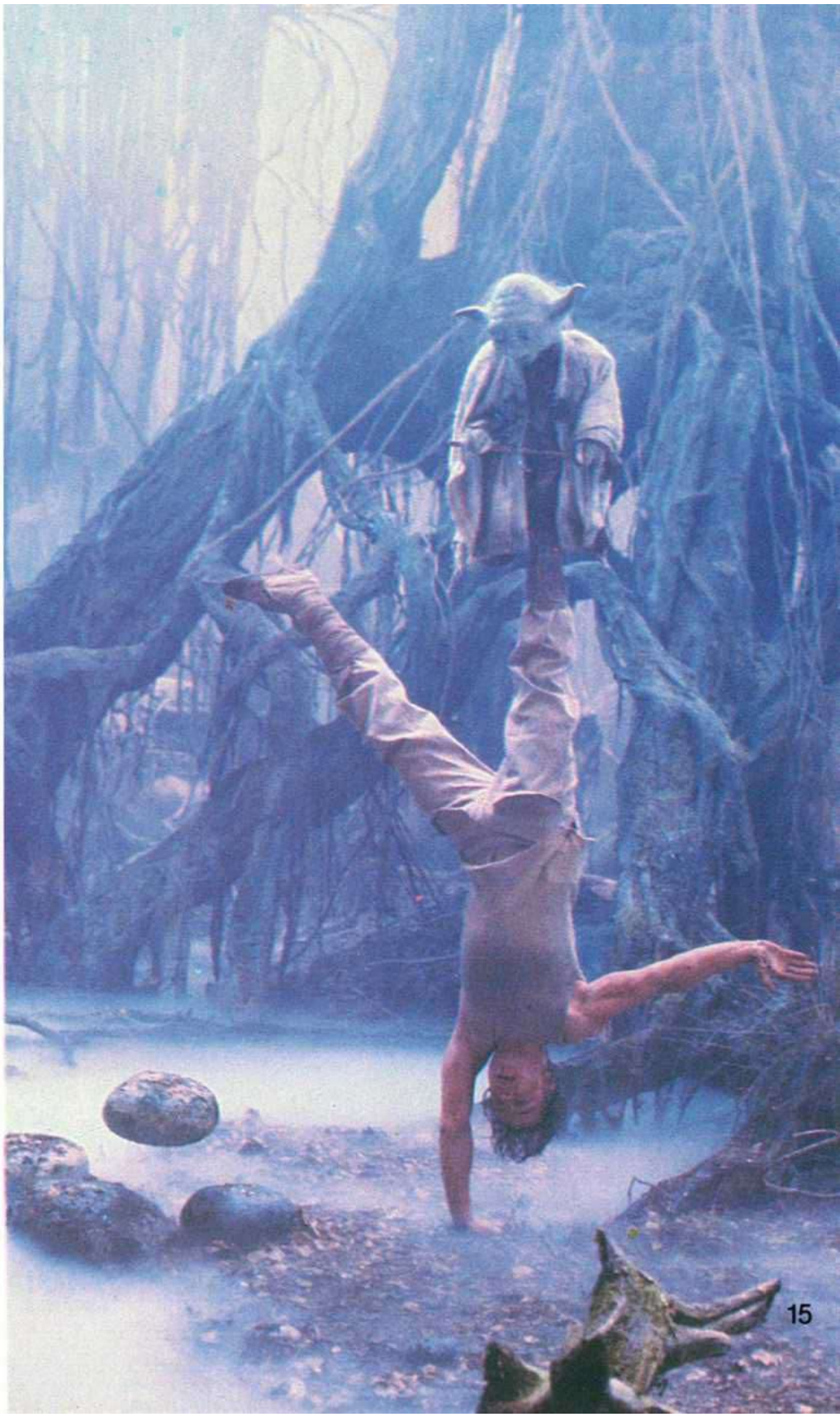
"But how do you know about the Force...or my father? Why you, you're Yoda! I was expecting someone larger!"

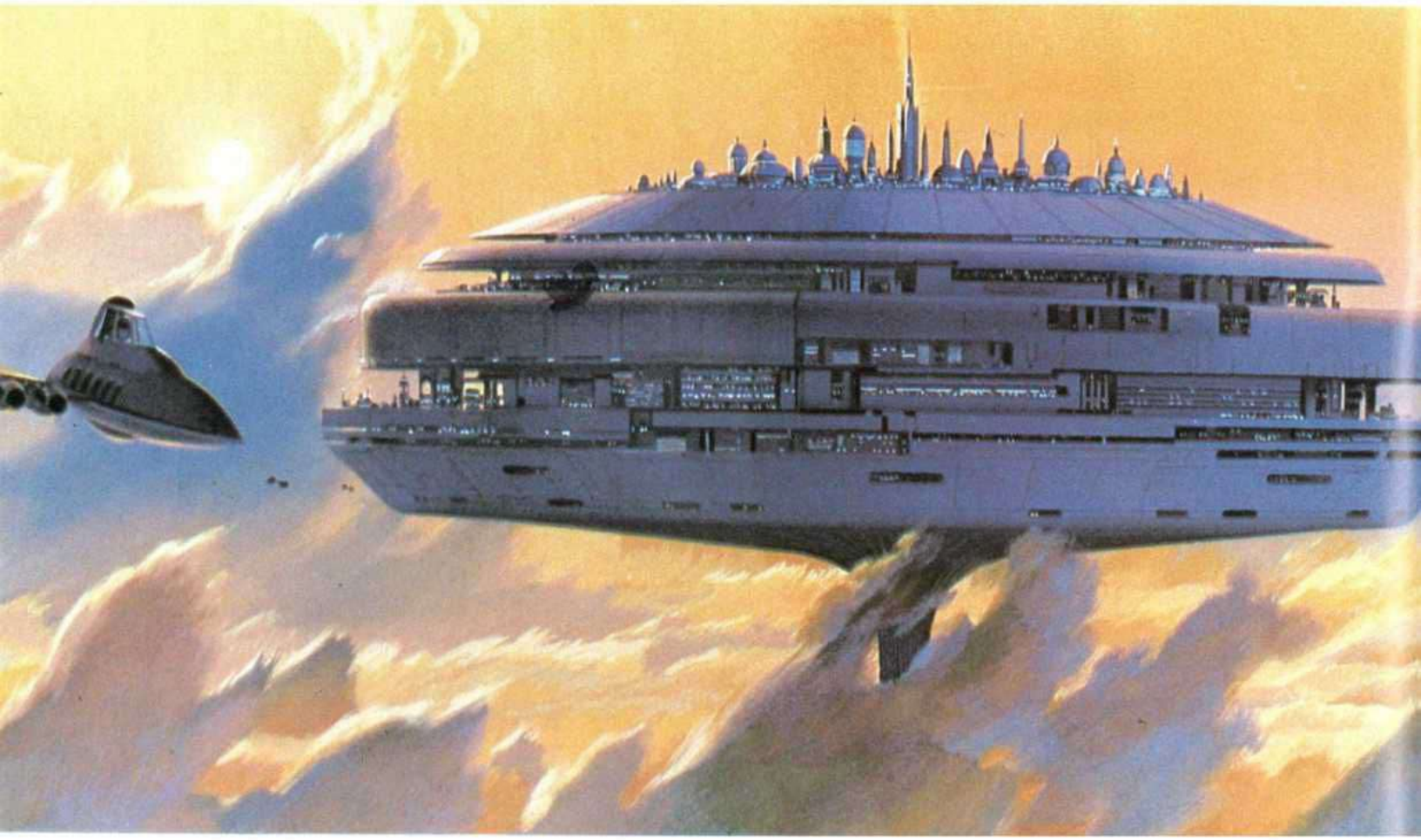
"Judge me not by size. For my ally is the Force!"

Luke began the rigorous training to become a Jedi. Yoda asked him to do seemingly impossible things, like move heavy objects with only his thoughts, and balance himself on one hand. The skeptical youth replied, "OK, I'll try."

"No. Try not. Do or do not. There is no try."

So under Yoda's instruction, Luke learned to use the Force for good.





Meanwhile, Han brought the *Millennium Falcon* in for a landing on the immense floating colony of Cloud City. "My buddy Lando runs this place. He and I go way back, we used to be partners in the sweetest smuggling racket..."

"But can we trust this friend of yours?" asked Leia.

"No. But he has no love for the Empire!"

Lando led his guests to the banquet room to celebrate their arrival. Suddenly, Imperial stormtroopers surrounded them! "Sorry, old buddy," said Lando miserably. "Darth Vader and a bounty hunter arrived just before you did. I had no choice. They're looking for someone called Skywalker."

"But why would Vader want Luke?" wondered Leia.

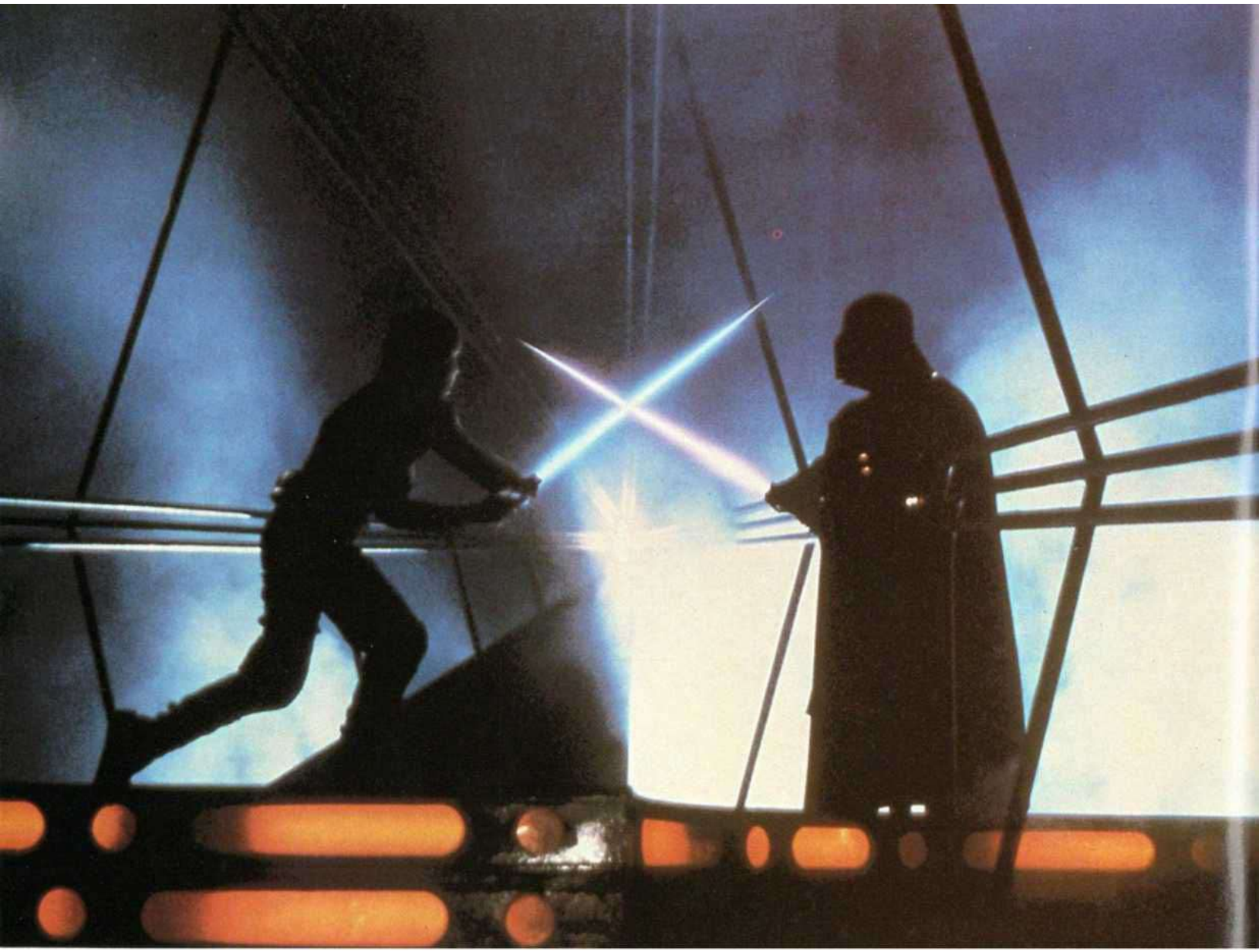
At that same moment, as Luke was training, a frightening vision formed in his mind. He saw his friends imprisoned on Cloud City. "I must go to them!"

Yoda shook his head. "No, ready you are not. Only a Jedi can defeat Vader. The training you must finish. Then go!"

"But they're my friends. I'll be back, Master Yoda. I promise."

Darth Vader stood in Cloud City's carbon-freezing room. "I'll take Skywalker to the Emperor, frozen but unharmed. We'll test it first. Bring in Captain Solo."

Han was lowered into a deep pit. Sub-freezing gasses swirled about him, encasing him in a hard metal form. "Solo's alive and in perfect hibernation. Excellent! Reset the machine for Skywalker!"



Luke's X-wing slipped into Cloud City. Led by the Force, he found himself face to face with his enemy, Darth Vader. Their light-sabers sprang to life. Luke attacked boldly, forcing the dark lord to retreat. "You have learned much, Young Skywalker, but you are not a Jedi yet!"

Darth Vader slashed the weapon out of Luke's hand and backed him onto a bridge. "Don't make me destroy you. Your future lies with me, for I am your father!"

Luke was stunned. "No, no! It's not true! I'll never join you!" With that, Luke stepped from the bridge and plunged helplessly toward the emptiness below.

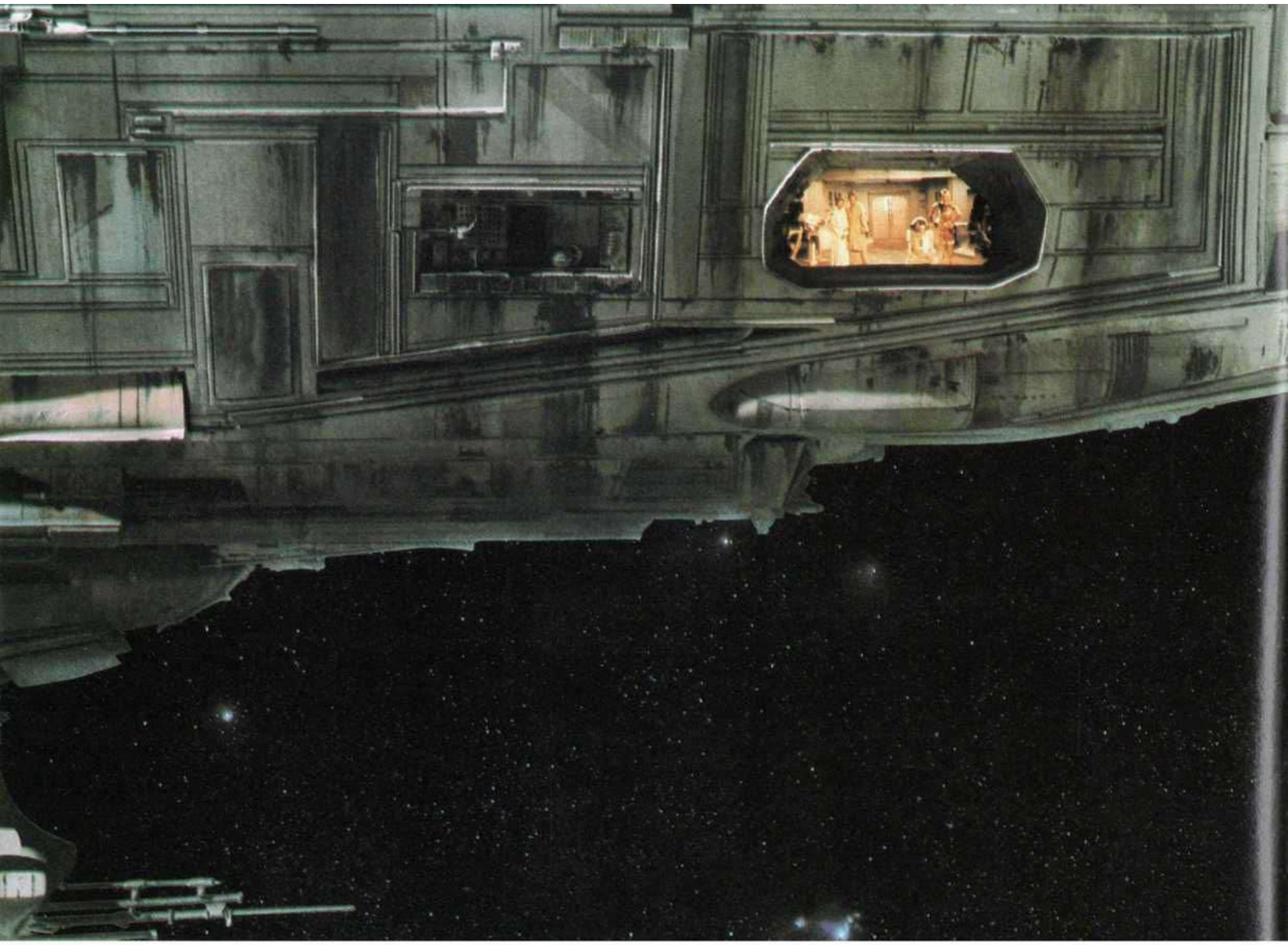
Lando secretly released Leia and Chewbacca. "Here are some blasters. Come on, we're getting out of here."

"But we've got to try to save Han!" But before Leia could finish, they were caught in a crossfire.

"Stormtroopers! Quick, to the *Falcon*!"

Just before Luke tumbled into space, he managed to grab a protruding weather vane. As the *Millennium Falcon* streaked away, Leia saw Luke dangling precariously beneath Cloud City. "Chewie, get under him!"

Lando opened the top hatch and pulled the wounded youth safely inside. "OK, now can we get out of here?"



Soon after, Luke awoke in the medical center of a Rebel cruiser. Lando greeted him, "Hi, kid! I'm glad I got to see you before I left. Chewie and I are going to find Han. The bounty hunter's got a head start, but we'll catch up!"

Luke and Leia watched the *Millennium Falcon* launch away. "Take care, my friends. And may the Force be with you!"

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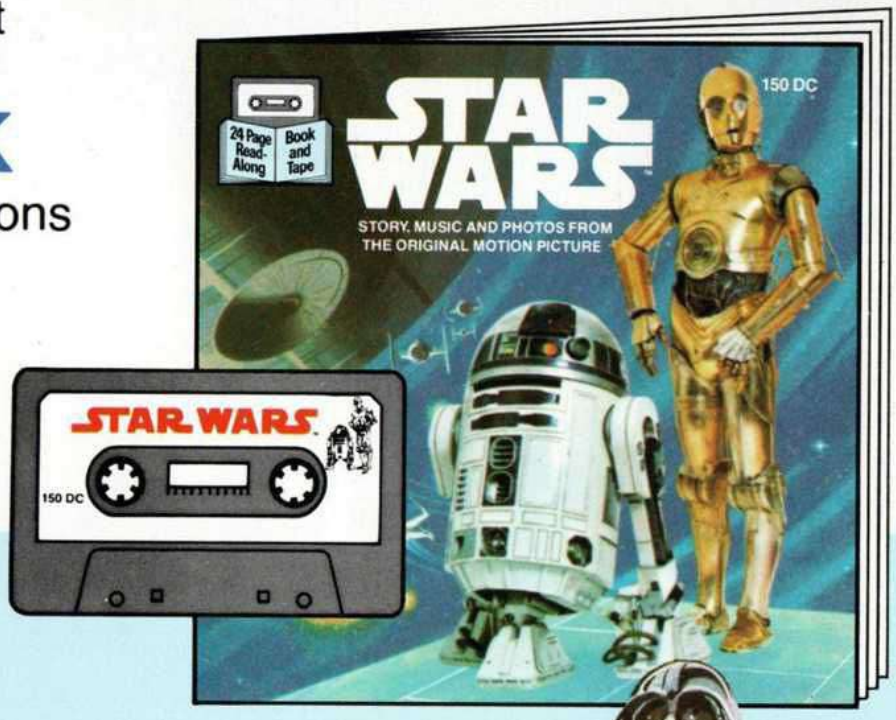

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